

BOOK REVIEW

JOHN DAWSON and ROB LUCAS. 2005. **The Nature of Plants: Habitats, Challenges & Adaptations.** (ISBN 0-88192-675-2, hbk.). Timber Press Inc. 133 S.W. Second Ave, Suite 450, Portland, OR 97204-3527, U.S.A. (**Orders:** www.timberpress.com, mail@timberpress.com, 503-227-2878, 1-800-327-5680, 503-227-3070 fax). \$39.95, 314 pp., 205 color photos, 5 color drawings, glossary, and index, 7.38" × 10.38".

The new book called *The Nature of Plants* is a plant lover's dream. Have you ever wondered how it's possible for any plants grow in the tundra? Or how underwater plants get their flowers pollinated? The authors have provided readers with a wonderful resource to answer these and many of other questions about plants surviving in extreme environments. The text is peppered with rich color photographic examples of the plants and landscapes described in the text.

In each chapter, the reader is introduced to unique environments, conditions, and climates; and then told about all the special challenges faced by plants that live there. For example, we're told about parasitic plants, desert plants (both hot and cold), fire effects, salt water plants, plants on windy terrain, plant interactions with animals, fungal and even bacterial interactions between the plants.

The authors provide a good informational background for the reader regarding the environmental and climatic situations of the plants. For example, in one chapter titled "Not Enough Water" the authors include an explanation of why deserts even exist and where they're located. This book covers a lot more than just North America when they go into detail on the deserts of the world including temperate deserts and the special adaptations that plants make for each environment.

Reading about the plant adaptations to these challenging environments makes this book particularly interesting. After a basic description of climates or special conditions, the author includes information about common plant survival strategies. For example, the chapter about fire shows how some plants use fire as a regeneration process; after being damaged, they release seeds or flower. Very often, the strategies are given with specific plant examples along with beautiful color photographs that help the reader visualize such reactions/adaptations. These images are especially wonderful because many of the images show plants in exotic locations. In addition, one chapter focuses on the various methods of reproduction and the different vectors for pollen transfer. This chapter included a wonderful discussion on the benefits and problems of self-pollination and out-crossing in plants.

The book *The Nature of Plants: Habitats, Challenges & Adaptations* is recommended for anyone with an interest in plants and their ability to survive in even the harshest of habitats. This book does not require much botanical background to enjoy, although an understanding of plant family traits will be helpful. A glossary is included for the less common terminology. All topics are explained with diverse examples and fantastic color photographs. Read *The Nature of Plants: Habitats, Challenges & Adaptations* and take a peek into the fascinating survival strategies of plants in extreme situations and environmental conditions.—Lee Luckeydoo, Herbarium, Botanical Research Institute of Texas, 509 Pecan Street, Fort Worth, TX 76102-4060, U.S.A.